DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 669 HE 021 645

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TITLE Barriers and Biases toward Women: Impediments to Administrative Progression.
PUB DATE Mar 88
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the annual Burlington International Women's Week (3rd, Burlington, VT, March 9, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Deans; *Administrators; Career Ladders; Civil Rights; College Presidents; Employed Women; Employment Level; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Females; Higher Education; Leadership; Occupational Aspiration; *Promotion (Occupational); Role Models; Role Perception; *Sex Bias; Stereotypes; Women Faculty
IDENTIFIERS *Women Administrators

ABSTRACT

Barriers to administrative advancement for women in academe are discussed. A study of perceived managerial style and leadership skill of women two-year college presidents was designed to fill a gap in research during an era of significant advancement opportunities for women. Leadership in higher education in the United States is gradually changing; in the period from 1975-1984, there has been a 93% increase in the number of women chief executive officers. Still, in 1985, less than 10% of presidential appointments were women. Leadership image is one of the major problems facing women trying to rise to the top level of their professions, since role models are few. In college and university administration, women administrators do "women's work," and they rarely serve as deans of business, engineering, or technology. Problems include such specific on-the-job factors as differential reward systems, discrimination in pay or promotion, and lack of support for professional growth. Other findings include: the higher the rank, the fewer the women; the higher the prestige of administrative jobs, the fewer the women; and women are promoted more often in smaller steps, while men are promoted less often but make greater leaps. Contains 32 references. (SM)

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BARRIERS AND BIASES TOWARD WOMEN: IMPEDIMENTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRESSION

Speech delivered before the Burlington's Third Annual International Women's Week - Women's Work - Women's Lives, Celebrating the strides and struggles of working women...

March 9, 1988

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The topic was edited from the dissertation titled, "The Top-Line Women Administrators in Public and Private Two-Year Institutions of Higher Education: Their Perceptions of the Managerial Style and Leadership Skill that Contributed to Executive Appointment," for presentation during the International Women's Week.

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> Women educators date back to prehistoric times. H.G. Wells theorized that both education and religion, in their truest form, were initiated by women. He also asserted that women not only were the first teachers, but also were the first farmers, tailors, porters, tool and pottery makers land owners, doctors... the first in every profession and trade known with the exception of those associated with killing (Guy, 1979).

If women can innovate and improvise with a high degree of proficiency in so many fields, including education, then more women can achieve professional goals as administrators in higher education. Women are increasingly populating the work force of organizations, but they practically never run them, especially large businesses and public establishments (Kanter, 1977). In 1974, the U.S. Office of Education reported that government regulating devices (e.g. affirmative action) had not changed the situation significantly.

Leadership in American higher education is gradually changing. While there are very few studies of individual women presidents, deans or other top-level women, the period from 1975-1984 has seen a 93% increase in the number of women chief executive officers (Moore & Wollitzer, 1979). Even with this progress, the American Council of Education found that in 1985 less than 10% of the presidential appointments were women. A higher rate of these presidential appointments has occurred in two-year public and private colleges than in four year colleges and universities. About 42% of the women presidents head two-year colleges (Touchton & Shavlik, 1985). In spite of the changes, and with more women being appointed at the presidential level, there are still relatively few women who hold presidencies in American colleges and universities.

One of the major problems facing the woman who wishes to rise to the top level of her profession is that of leadership image (Nieboer, 1975). Role models or identification models of behavior are essential for the

development of a viable professional self-concept. However, there are very few models of women in leadership positions for aspiring women to emulate (Nieboer).

Rose (1975) pointed out that women are redefining their roles and their educational aspirations. Higher education institutions must strive to reinforce these aspirations and eliminate the barriers that discourage them. Women who hold senior-level administrative appointments in higher education can provide models for other women who are interested in tracing the steps of their advancement, but because the number of women holding these positions is disporportionately small, the number of role models is limited. Less than 10% of all colleges and universities have women who serve in the senior-level appointments of president, chancellor, or provost (Petersen, 1980). The Chronicle of Higher Education (1986) reported that in 1984 there were 3,297 public and private colleges and universities in the United States. This number included 1,281 two-year colleges.

This study of perceived managerial style and leadership skill of women presidents will fill a gap in research during an era of significant advancement opportunities for women. The women presidents holding academic leadership roles reflect the importance of women as academic leaders. These women need to continue to develop broad leadership roles and functions for vertical career transition within the college or university (Edmonds, 1984).

Academic administration is not a difficult role for women. Managing themselves and actively directing their own lives can bring to present day realities some of those managerial skills acquired as part of women's history (Carey, 1984). The additional skills, knowledge and strategies acquired as women assume positions of leadership and real power in organizational life further diminish any difficulties of the academic administration role.

Barriers and Biases Toward Women in Administration

Donohue (1980) investigated career patterns that existed among women currently serving in senior-level staff and line positions in higher education administration. She identified career differences based upon choice of career and career appointments previous to the executive level appointment.

Tinsley (1985) found that higher education has a pyramidal structure where women are clustered at the bottom of the pyramid. Women are far more likely to be limited to positions as assistants or associates than they are to be assigned positions as directors, deans vice presidents, provosts, or presidents. Women are more likely to be staff than line. Line connotes action; staff connotes advice. Line is hierarchical while staff is collateral. Line has authority and staff has influence. A bureau chief is a line official, and his research assistant is a staff officer (Dimock and Dimock, 1964). It can be difficult to differentiate between line and staff because despite the fact that classic organizational theory maintains the distinction that line commands and staff advises, "in practice, staff frequently also commands and in general can hardly be said to carry out functions purely incidental to line" (Nigro and Nigro, 1977).

Despite this operating limitation, for the purpose of this analysis, line and staff have been differentiated in the classical sense. Thus an "assistant to" or a program director was classified as staff, presidents, vice-presidents, and deans were coded as line officials. In part the use of this administrative job type criterion was based on the assumption that women were still being tracked into administrative "helpmate" positions (Palley, 1978).

Women are tracked within the structure of employment in the education profession. In college and university administration women administrators do "women's work." Women hold the positions in continuing education programs that focus on women. Women run the programs that deal with women or minorities as a special constituency, such as women's studies programs, women's resource centers, developmental skills centers, and special advising centers. Women serve as deans of professional programs in which students are primarily women, such as nursing, home economics, and social work programs. They rarely serve as deans of business, engineering, or technology (Tinsley, 1985).

Concerns about whether a woman administrator has the ability to fit in are more important than the managerial skills necessary to function effectively as a senior administrative officer. These concerns reflect the desire of colleges and universities to be led by individuals who share the organization's values and who can relate to the institution's

political, economic, and social realities. Consequently, it feels like a risk to hire a leader who is different for an institution (Tinsley).

Ralston (1974) examined attitudes toward women university administrators in the state of Florida. She found that women aspiring to college presidencies should identify role models in the positions to which they aspire and study the behavior patterns and professional experiences of the models in top positions. Aspiring women should then consider the possible incorporation of their findings into their experiences and behavior patterns.

Horner (1969) said women consciously or unconsciously expect to have a relatively subordinate status in our society. Horner also found that women are conditioned through childhood to feel extreme anxiety at appearing to act in an aggressive manner. Managers in organizations have traditionally communicated to women that their advancement potential is limited. The internalization of these messages by women partially explains the low attractiveness of managerial positions in organizations for females (Rizzo, 1978).

Harris (1972) stated that the reality still is that women are excellent students at universities but seldom teachers of administrators because of some vague sense of their unsuitability. Although there are efforts being made to change the historic picture, Harris felt that the efforts were not wholehearted because cultural bias and vested interest are too strong.

The myth that women are not well qualified and are not effective researchers is unwarranted. Simon (1967) found that women do as much scholarly research as men, and in the fields of sociology and psychology they do more. Henderson (1967) reported that women with doctorates were similar to men with doctorates in teaching assignments and published works.

One study indicated that it is America's sex-role ideology which causes so few women to emerge from childhood with the motivation to seek out any role other than the one that society has dictated (Komorovsky, 1973). To expect young women to rebel against the cultural standards for females is to demand of them much more than is expected of men attempting to succeed in their field, since men are supposed to be aggressive and women are not.

Adams (1975) concluded that successful women are often not taken seriously by men. Adams also reported that in achieving success, the executive woman could expect that people with whom she worked, both men and women,

would resent her drive, her ambition, and her desire to achieve on the basis of merit. This further supports Kanter's (1977) observation of the isolation women achievers feel as they ascend the administrative ladder.

Equally in line with role expectations are level of placement and salary differences. Howard and Downey (1980) reported that twenty-five percent of the full-time faculty are women. This represents no increase from the 1970 statistics. Requests for promotion and professional development were denied more often for women than for men with identical credentials (Rosen and Jerdee, 1973, 1974). In contrast to studies, discriminatory bias in natural settings is "invisible." It is so because 1) "the process itself is unconscious, 2) the impressions accumulate over time, and 3) rules may be invoked more literally in a woman's situation" (Geis, Carter, and Butler, 1985).

In spite of the biases, the proportion of women in top-level administrative positions has increased slightly since 1970, but women are still grossly underrepresented. Even with women administrators as able in positions of leadership as men, only 9% of the women in institutions of higher education hold the rank of full professor (Howard and Downey, 1980).

Not only is there the generally sexist societal view of women who dare to be successful in traditionally male jobs, there are also more specific on-the job factors such as differential reward systems, discrimination in pay or promotion, and lack of support for professional growth (Rizzo, 1988). The higher the rank, the fewer the women; women's salaries remain 20 percent lower than males; and the larger the institution the fewer the women. Women outnumber men in part-time positions including instructorships and lectureships (Rizzo, 1978).

Typically, women are encouraged to fail (Epstein, 1974). Women receive less encouragement to prepare for and to seek administrative positions. Academic mobility, including movement into administration, has required strong faculty credentials which often come about through professional visibility-primarily research and publications. Few women qualify on these traditionally defined grounds for advancement (Fennema and Ayer, 1984). Strong faculty credentials are required to achieve an administrative post, but once there, other skills and abilities are required to perform the job (Fennema and Ayer, 1984).

Caplow and McGee (1958) suggest that women scholars are not taken seriously and cannot look forward to a normal professional career - not because they have low prestige but because they are outside the prestige system entirely. They postulate that the power in the informal network becomes the only source of approval for token women to appear in upper - level positions. Women have not been privy to many of those exclusive networks.

Women often achieve a legitimate position through less direct forms of power that fit the stereotyped female role. Women's body language, words, and gestures create an aura of uncertainty. Consequently, women do in fact act less able, less assertive, and less experienced as leaders, all of which contribute to the development of low self-concepts and self-abnegation.

Women are superior to men in exchanging information, maintaining organizational relationships, and responding to outsiders (Hemphill, Griffiths, and Frederickson, 1965). However, explanations for the slow advancement of women as compared to that of their male counterparts can be developed from further review of the literature. One explanation is society's expectation of women. Women have been taught to conceal their knowledge and abilities so as not to be perceived as threatening (Moore and Wollitzer 1979).

Given the numbers of women who successfully complete the doctoral level of study, who have presumably satisfied the same selection and retention requirements as for males, and who have fulfilled program requirements in the same research-oriented doctoral granting departments as men professors, is it not strange that women fail to move forward professionally in relation to males with the same or comparable credentials? (Moore and Wollitzer, 1979). The jobs available to men have not been as readily available to women (Palley, 1978). This practice results in women appearing less capable of leadership.

Women are often judged to be ill-prepared because of their behavior, and it is only in recent times that a woman who displays traditionally masculine behaviors is viewed as healthy. Even though she is now more likely to be viewed as healthy, many males will continue to accept her as a peer with countless "yes-but (she is in some manner unusual)" reasons and rationalizations (Fennema and Ayer, 1984).

Women have received the credentials, have trained and prepared for opportunities, and continually struggle to acquire and maintain administrative positions in colleges and universities. Forrest, Andrea, and Ellickson (1984) and Hetherington and Barcelo (1985) reported that:

1. The higher the rank, the fewer the women.
2. The higher the prestige of administrative jobs, the fewer the women.
3. Women are promoted more often but in smaller steps, and men are promoted less often but make greater leaps.

Managerial and leadership aspirants need to learn that the real source of their power is their own knowledge and skill, and the strength of their own personalities, not the authority conferred on them by their positions (Livingston, 1978).

The woman of tomorrow must cease to apologize for the possession of intellect and talent (Kirkpatrick, 1965). Women presidents were not too modest to admit that they are influential. They reflect the insight, imagination and strength of the women executive. Among the expertise the women identified as essential was academic training, managemnet training--including budgeting and financial management and teaching experience. Highly developed political acumen was considered essential for serving effectively as a chief executive.

Despite real and measurable advances, the different ways in which women and men continue to be socialized in their access to administrative opportunities still create differences in their perceptions of the world. Even as women become the senior-level administrators of colleges and universities in greater numbers, they bring to these roles a level of sensitivity which surpasses that of their male colleagues in predominantly male academic communities.

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